Cinderella vs. Big Adult Escape Narratives
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There is some evidence, and I am exploring this evidence, that such matters as thesis statements and certain elements of parallelism within sentences can be taught with sector analysis. However, sector analysis remains chiefly a formidable grammatical approach, not a rhetorical one. And that is why I objected to Linn's experiment which lacked rhetorical models and any discussion of literature in Class C, the class that used sector analysis. Many elements combine in a writing course and the use of sector analysis does not preclude all other methods. Contrastive analysis, collaborative learning, simulation tasks, to name but a few, are equally valid.

Moreover, sector analysis does not attempt to teach writing "as a matter of form." Linn makes it sound too prescriptive—here a shifter, there an X-word, everywhere a dependent clause. What sector analysis does is to make students aware of the form-function correlation of words and word groups within sentences as they relate to other sentences within the paragraph. It teaches students the syntactical options that are available in standard English sentences; it teaches students how to edit in the real sense of the word "edit"; it teaches students how to proofread and correct many of the common errors made by immature writers.

In a recent excellent publication, *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*, Mina P. Shaughnessy writes:

> BW [Basic Writing] students at the beginning of their apprenticeship seldom enjoy this kind of ease (the ease that the experienced writer uses to get around the constraints of the English language) with formal sentences. For them, as for the foreign language student, the question is rarely "How can I make this sentence better?" but "How can I make this sentence right"? Their concern is with the syntax of competence [that is, to perform correctly] not of style, for they lack the sure sense of what the written code will allow. (p. 44)

Sector analysis is a marvelous tool for the remedial student because it helps him to "perform correctly." In addition, it helps the remedial student to perform with assurance.

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Cinderella vs. Big Adult Escape Narratives

David Samuelson's "The Experience of Cinderella" (*CE*, April 1976) makes sense as a jab at the popular novel, but it's a little hard on the fairy tales. He argues that "what we undergo in the experience of reading big adult escape narratives differs little from our early experiences reading fairy tales, that the worlds modelled by the windows of both kinds of escapist fiction are one and the same" (p. 767). In other words, modern pulp fiction like Barbara Tori's *The Cinderella Factor* and Irving Wallace's *The Fan Club* offers an inferior literary experience—e.g. happy endings—instead of mimetic complexity, and may even encourage us to see real life in this simplistic way.

For anyone familiar with the Grimms' tales, which include Cinderella, it may be hard to understand why Samuelson thinks they bear such a close analogy to the popular novel. Here, perhaps, is the reason: "Popular novels are popular because of their imposture: they systematically retreat from the new to formulate experience as superficial and tiny and formulaic as that of fairy tales literally

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read" (p. 770). Of course these tales would seem superficial and tiny if we *could* read them literally. But the primary feature of the tales is their tendency to mean beyond themselves; they work for us because they represent, in miniature, that larger and deeper experience which pulp novels tend to gloss over. In short, while it is true that the formulaic pulp novels fail as mimetic narratives, the fairy tales succeed as art despite their rigidity and simplicity of form. I admire Mr. Samuelson's article, but I believe his criteria for mimetic "quality" in the novels should be qualified in regard to this distinction.

Samuelson's first basic criticism of the pulp novels is that their structures resemble fairy tale plots: "The underlying formula is that of the fairy tale: the character of the peasant who becomes royal, devices for a miraculous elevation and subsequently transformed identities, and an end that is happily final" (p. 769). But if the underlying formula of the novel is reminiscent of fairy tale patterns, it is not necessarily a sign of inferior art. Both the fairy tale and the popular novel are offshoots of the narrative tradition known as romance, a relationship so well recognized that Frye can call the tales "naive romance" and the novels "sentimental romance."[1] The common theme shared by these and other romance forms is a preoccupation with identity, and specifically the identity of the hero. The hero (or heroine, as the case may be) is introduced to us within an initially stable situation, but then is forced out into the world to discover his potentialities. The hero's potential, or "true" identity, may indeed be implicit in him from the beginning, but the emphasis is on the way he is drawn out of himself by his experiences, thereby acquiring the largeness of character destined for him. Thus the narrative is pulled along steadily, if not always logically, by a series of incidents or adventures that are in a sense vertically connected with his final, realized identity as it will appear to us at the end of the story. Therefore, the happy ending, superficial as it may appear in a popular novel, is not a facile borrowing from the fairy tales. Rather it is an indication that the narrative is dedicated, at least in its *form*, to the unfolding of an inner truth about the hero.

A second and more fundamental link that Mr. Samuelson discovers between the novels and the fairy tales is that they share a "root schema"—"the reader's confidence, his firm anticipation, of precisely the kind of experience the narrative will unfold for him" (p. 769). For instance, "in the model of popular experience, sex is the provocative equivalent to the wild notions of possibility keyed by the fairy tale's formulated opening, 'es war einmal,' once upon a time. Sex is royalty achieved. Sex is reality, too" (p. 774). Yet in the novels, this promise of an exotic, sensuous, liberating experience leads only to a hollow illusion, a "formulaic," "severely stylized," empty world out of the *New Yorker* ads.

I can attest to the emptiness of sex in the escapist novels. But it would be wrong to conclude that "once upon a time" and other similar fairy tale conventions are equally empty, or that they represent an inferior way of telling a good story about "reality." Fairy tale formulas, characters and adventures transcend their surface "emptiness" because of a process of sublimation, a topic which Samuelson disposes of too quickly in his introduction. What happens in the tales is that the feelings and the complexity we would ordinarily attribute to the main character are sublimated, or externalized, appearing in the tale in a concrete, or objectified form.

In the Grimms' version of Cinderella, for example, when Cinderella's father

[1]Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 3.

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goes to a fair he asks his three daughters what to bring them. The two stepdaughters (who are pretty and fair of face, but ugly and black in their hearts) ask for fine clothes, pearls and jewels. Cinderella asks only for the first thing that brushes against his hat on the way home. Sure enough, as he rides home from the fair, a hazel twig knocks off his hat, and he breaks it off and brings it to her. She plants it on her mother's grave, watering it with her tears. The twig grows into a tree, and as Cinderella goes there three times a day to weep and pray, a little white bird lights on the tree; every time she utters a wish the little bird will throw down to her what she wishes for.[2] For Cinderella's development, and for the advancement of the tale's action, this tree is an important feature. It doesn't matter that there is no logical motivation for Cinderella to ask for such a gift. Planted on the grave, the tree is a concrete way of expressing Cinderella's enduring memory of her dead mother. Like the ashes on the hearth (the warm center of the home, as well as a reminder of death), the tree is a suggestion of Cinderella's own strongly rooted integrity and worth. But since we are not asked in these tales to infer the hero's inner life, we can almost say that these concrete symbols *are* Cinderella's integrity; reading the tale, we accept them as such, and are satisfied.

Indeed, the fairy tales are satisfying. They are formulaic and predictable, a mozaic of metaphors, so that we cannot read them for their matter, yet they speak powerfully to us through their form. The heroes who emerge from the forest or from the ashes of the hearth to fulfill their inner promise affirm our own deep wish for order, justice and fulfillment. It is this inner dimension of our response that Samuelson misses when he examines the experience of reading fairy tales and popular novels, and chooses to emphasize the thinking and reasoning processes ("cognitive transactions") rather than those aspects of reading which are "merely concerns of depth psychology" (p. 767).

By so doing, Samuelson is able to treat the novels as examples of inferior thinking—the kind of daydreaming that appeals to lazy minds nurtured by fairy tale plots—and he can attack the major pretension of these novels, their claim to "realism." But this "cognitive" approach will not do for the fairy tales, and it may not serve well as a criterion for judging literary works of greater range and depth than, for instance, Wallace's *The Fan Club*. The same objection can be made to mimetic sensitivity to detail, Samuelson's second criterion for quality in the novels. Naturally, the "displacement," or elaboration of folk themes in sophisticated literary forms tends to shift our attention from the formal elements to the surface text, the mirror of "things as they are." Yet the basic narrative structure may retain a symbolic resonance which conveys itself in various ways through the surface details. Examples that come to mind are the works of Kafka and Jerzy Kosinski, which Samuelson has cited with approval. It is by now a commonplace that Kafka's stories are like "anti-fairy tales," and surely there are fairy tale themes—inverted ones— in *The Painted Bird*, that sardonic journey from innocence into experience and beyond.

To summarize these observations I will try to restate one of the critical questions Samuelson raises at the end of his article. "If all windows are painted over," he asks, "how do we explain the varying degrees of compositional talent in the pictures, or the varying degrees of correspondence we sense between picture and the experience outside the door?"

[2] *The Grimms' German Folk Tales*, trans. Francis P. Magoun, Jr. & Alexander H. Krappe (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960), p. 87.

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The metaphor he uses here is something like Plato's allegory of the cave: through these literary windows, we project our visions of reality, so that "a bad fictional model of the world" may ultimately blur our perceptions of the real world. But let's turn this analogy around. Sometimes the figures in the window don't project; rather, as archetypes of experience, they *reflect* a reality which is discoverable within us and which can be explored and assimilated through the experience of reading. Fairy tales, like some other nonmimetic forms, engage us in this way. And so, perhaps, do many good works of modern fiction.

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Response to William F. Woods

Mr. Woods is right—in the "Cinderella" essay (*CE*, April 1976) I probably seemed hard on fairy tales. More precisely, I did not concede to the experience of reading the fairy tale those "depths" by which they are routinely defended: that is, vague stipulations of identity, ghostly and elusive archetypes, and sundry symbols of a sublimation sort. I have never felt that it was this kind of buried treasure that explains the power of elemental narratives.

Finally, until literary criticism shifts its attention from all that we conceivably *could* experience to what we *do* experience, its reconstructions will remain fanciful and turgid gesturing toward murky ghastliness.

Perhaps the intellectual burden of "depth criticism" is really a kind of forthright and sorted-out confession of the critic's own nightly hungering, his own inchoate visions of privation and grace, his own trek from innocence to experience.

Until then, no scholarly menu for inner experience, please.

DAVID SAMUELSON

The F. Andre Favat Chair

In December, 1976, Dr. F. Andre Favat, President of the Massachusetts Council of Teachers of English, was tragically slain in Boston.

The Massachusetts Council of Teachers of English is pleased to announce the establishment of The F. Andre Favat Chair in memory of our late President, whose leadership in the field of English and Education was outstanding on state and national levels. The purpose of the F. Andre Favat Chair is to provide a monetary award to persons whose contributions to the teaching of English, both academically and creatively, approach those of F. Andre Favat.

Friends of Andre who are desirous of contributing to this memorial fund should draw checks to The F. Andre Favat Chair Fund, and send them to Ira Steinberg, Waltham High School, Waltham, MA 02154.

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